

WHAT IS PHANTOM PAIN AND HOW MAY I ALLEVIATE IT?

Phantom pain is the feeling that the amputated limb is still present. This can feel like cramping, aching, burning or a shock-like sensation. Development of this pain can vary in time but ranges from immediate to years after amputation. To some degree, most amputees will experience this, and 5% to 10% of them will need to seek medical care because of the significance of pain. The name "phantom" explains its mysterious origins and understandings. Researchers have discovered the concept of brain reorganization, which studies how lost brain input from the nerves of the amputated limb is reactivated to respond to nerves of the remaining limb. Pressures on the limb may trigger the brain to respond to the lost nerves on the missing limb, which creates the phantom pain. Research has shown that if the lost nerves for brain input are electrically stimulated, the amputee can feel sensations in their missing limb.

Some contributing factors of phantom pain include age, stress, anxiety, fear and/or fatigue. There are many therapies that can be used to alleviate the pain, such as acupuncture, biofeedback, chiropractic and surgery. Home remedies may also differ among each amputee and should be discussed with their prosthetist or physician. Some patients have wrapped their residual limb with a hot, warm or cold pack/towel and have applied cooling creams or gels, depending on what works for them. Phantom pain can be a mental game as well. Some patients have used mental exercises and relaxation to alleviate symptoms. This includes tightening the muscles in the residual limb and slowly releasing. A helpful tool is to log when the pain occurs to identify triggers, so those triggers may be reduced or eliminated.



Any further questions may be discussed with your prosthetist or physician. **It is important to remember that with patience, the right remedy may be found for your phantom pain.**



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